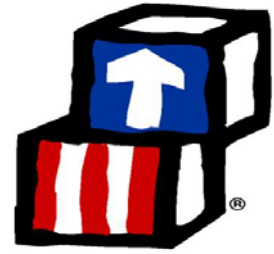


Head Start Healthy Marriage Newsletter

November 2008



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Hope Street's Methods For Increasing Workshop Attendance

Include a telephone number for participant registration on all flyers

Provide well structured childcare

Provide tokens for public transportation

Follow up with 3-5 reminders to those who pre-register

Provide an immediate reward to attendees

Encourage attendees to tell family and friends



A young family with their Hope Street facilitator (left).

Giving Hope To Families

Affiliated with one of the largest birthing centers in the country - Head Start grantee Hope Street Family Center - is a public-private partnership that provides services to nearly 500,000 young children and families living in inner-city Los Angeles. Operating under the combined patronage of the California Hospital Medical Center and the University of California - Los Angeles, the Center has unique access to parents in delivering healthy marriage programs as a Head Start grantee.

"We cater to a predominantly Spanish speaking immigrant population, " shares Tania Benacerraf, Program Director. "Being aware of the unique cultural elements helps us

Key Hispanic Cultural Values

Familismo - the value of the family as the central unit rather than the couple. Latinos place more emphasis on child rearing, family activity, and family obligations, than on the functioning of the couple. Marriage education programming targeting only couples may limit their success.

Simpatia - the value of promoting behaviors that generate pleasant interactions while avoiding conflict or disagreement. Recent immigrants, first-generation families, or more traditional couples may need to be oriented differently before given direct approaches for conflict resolution and communication that could be seen as impolite, rude, and aggressive.

Personalismo - alludes to personal space and closeness expressed by shaking hands,

provide more relevant programs. We've tried new ways to promote our Spanish-language sessions, like:

- producing flyers in Spanish about the individual sessions/workshops,
- posting the notices in areas with high traffic, (laundromats, libraries, restaurants, and other local establishments work well), and
- engaging community based agencies to help promote the workshops."

Hope Street Center's creativity extends to the course materials through the addition of a series of mini "Novelas." These Spanish-language, soap opera style video clips, bring focus to topics about healthy relationships in an entertaining format, can be delivered to participants regardless of literacy level, and allow for many hands-on activities. Employing well-trained facilitators who can adequately address sensitive issues, such as domestic violence, positions Hope Street Family Center to be an optimistic advocate for stronger families.

Cultural Values Impact Hispanic Relationships

As a group, Hispanics in the United States are characterized as a very heterogeneous group, originating from twenty-two countries with diverse historical, political, economic, and social backgrounds, and they have diverse ethnic, immigration, and cultural traditions (Tulane Hispanic Health Initiative, 2002). Although most Hispanics are from Latin and South American countries, some Hispanic populations resided in this country prior to the establishment of what is known today as the United States. This rich and inter-ethnic diversity within the Hispanic/Latino population increases the complexities of truly understanding the cultural adaptation issues faced by Hispanics currently living and arriving in the United States.



giving hugs, or touching as manifestations of appreciation and affection. Understanding this is important to facilitators as they are the ones to interact directly with Hispanic clients and to secure adequate time/space for these interactions in the sessions.

Confianza - relates to trust and expected reciprocity. There are often family and community "gatekeepers" that can assist or hinder efforts. Food, familiarity, and relationship building over time, are critical to gain the trust of the family or community.

Mary's Tips for A Successful Workshop

Draw participants in on the first session, make them want to come back.

Use icebreakers to help the couples become comfortable with each other.

Stress confidentiality during the sessions.

Help participants to recognize their differences, to openly communicate, and to value each other.

Use exercises that help pull each spouse into the other's world.

Emphasize the importance of spending time together.

Latino marriages and couple relationships are embedded in strong cultural values (Flores). These values may counteract U.S. mainstream attitudes toward marriage. Understanding the particularities of the Latino/Hispanic culture is central to the development of a responsive Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative, the preparation of relevant curriculums, and the training of effective staff.

A culturally sensitive curriculum requires an in-depth understanding of the Hispanic culture and the target audience of the program. Culturally insulated programs may not respond to the needs and reality of Hispanic couples. Instead they may inadvertently alienate couples by responding to misunderstood expectations, myths, and stereotypes of certain ethnic groups.

For additional details on other cultural values that impact delivery of healthy marriage curriculum and the research data that supports the information contained in this article, which was adapted from a brief entitled *Cultural Adaptation and Relationship Dynamics*, see the [Administration for Children and Families website](#).

Head Start Facilitator Spotlight



Helpful Healthy Marriage

[National Healthy Marriage Resource Center](#)

[Administration for Children and Families](#)

[Smart Marriages](#)

For more information

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"I absolutely loved my previous job conducting home visits as a case worker. It was frustrating though. There was a great need for relationship therapy but there was no place to send them. How could I help these families and single women with no resources? Then, here comes the Head Start Healthy Marriage initiative. I had my doubts, but I couldn't wait to see if this program helped out 'my' families!" Mary Gagliano buzzes with excitement, retelling her experiences as a facilitator for Head Start's healthy marriage sessions in rural Carbon County, Pennsylvania. The Head Start program serves a three hundred and eighty-six mile area with a population of over sixty-one thousand people.

Formal facilitator training for Mary was brief, inspiring Mary's self-preparation for the sessions with a goal of keeping participants coming back for more. "Our families usually had trouble sticking with the programs we recommended. You had to recruit so many just to keep a small percentage going."

Using tools like ingenious "homework" keeps it interesting. Each week couples are encouraged to spend one-to-two hours together, including watching a romantic comedy, playing board games, and completing marriage inventories. "Even after the program is done, they talk about getting together for group board games and movie nights with other couples who have completed the program. These are hard working people, and even at this, they still struggle to earn a living wage. I have great respect for them; they have found a way to have fun with their spouses on a limited budget," Ms. Gagliano exclaims.

The hard work has paid off. Of the 52 couples Mary Gagliano has worked with in a year, only 2 did not complete the program. "Everybody wants to know how to be happy. We all want to be with someone and be happy, not miserable," she adds. "These are young couples where both spouses work. Finding time for themselves is tough. We don't expect them to come spend their free time reading long PowerPoint presentations. Keeping it interesting and fun is the solution!"